

# APPOLO STUDY CENTRE

## FEBRUARY MONTH TEST TEST -1

### UNIT- VII INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

#### 12<sup>TH</sup> VOL -I

### UNIT 4. Advent of Gandhi and Mass Mobilisation

#### Introduction

- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in the coastal town of Porbandar in 1869. When he returned to India in 1915 he had a record of fighting against inequalities imposed by the racist government of South Africa. Gandhi certainly wanted to be of help to forces of nationalism in India. He was in touch with leaders India as he had come into contact with Congress leaders while mobilizing support for the South African Indian cause earlier. Impressed by activities and ideas of Gopala Krishna Gokhale, he acknowledged him as his political Guru. On his return to India, following Gokhale's advice, Gandhi, who was away from India for over two decades, spent a year travelling all over the country acquainting himself with the situation. He established his Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmedabad but did not take active part in political movements including the Home Rule movement.

- While in South Africa, Gandhi, gradually evolved the technique of 'Satyagraha,' based on 'Satya' and 'Ahimsa' i.e, truth and non-violence, to fight the racist South African regime. Even while resisting evil and wrong a Satyagrahi had to be at peace with himself and not hate the wrongdoer. A Satyagrahi would willingly accept suffering in the course of resistance, and hatred had no place in the exercise. Truth and nonviolence would be weapons of the brave and fearless and not cowards. For Gandhi there was no difference between precept and practice, faith and action.

## **Gandhi's Experiments of Satyagraha**

### **(a) Champaran Movement (1917)**

- The first attempt at mobilizing the Indian masses was made by Gandhi on an invitation by peasants of Champaran. Before launching the struggle he made a detailed study of the situation. Indigo cultivators of the district Champaran in Bihar were severely exploited by the European planters who had bound the peasants to compulsorily grow indigo on lease on 3/20th of their fields and sell it at the rates fixed by the planters. This system squeezed the peasants and eventually reduced them to penury. Accompanied by local leaders such as Rajendra Prasad, Mazharul Huq, Acharya Kripalani and Mahadeva Desai, Gandhi conducted a detailed enquiry. The British officials ordered Gandhi to leave the district. But he refused and told the administration that he would defy the order because it was unjust and face the consequences.
- Subsequently an enquiry committee with Gandhi also as a member was formed. It was not difficult for Gandhi to convince the committee of the difficulties of the poor peasants. The report was accepted and implemented resulting in the release of the indigo cultivators of the bondage of European planters who gradually had to withdraw from Champaran itself.

### **(b) Mill Workers' Strike and Gandhi's Fast at Ahmedabad (1918)**

- Thus Gandhi met with his first success in his homeland. The struggle also enabled him to closely understand the condition of peasantry. The next step at mobilizing the masses was the workers of the urban

centre, Ahmedabad. There was a dispute between the textile workers and the mill owners. He met both the parties and when the owners refused to accept the demands of the low paid workers, Gandhi advised them to go on strike demanding a 35 percent increase in their wages. To bolster the morale of the workers he went on fast. The worker's strike and Gandhi's fast ultimately forced the mill owners' to concede the demand.

### (c) The Kheda Struggle (1918)

- The peasants of Kheda district, due to the failure of monsoon, were in distress. They had appealed to the colonial authorities for remission of land revenue during 1918. As per government's famine code, in the event of crop yield being under 25 percent of the average the cultivators were entitled for total remission. But the authorities refused and harassed them demanding full payment. The Kheda peasants who were also battling the plague epidemic, high prices and famine approached the Servants of India Society, of which Gandhi was a member, for help. Gandhi, along with Vithalbhai Patel, intervened on behalf of the poor peasants and advised them to withhold payment and 'fight unto death against such a spirit of vindictiveness and tyranny.' Vallabhbhai Patel, a young lawyer and Indulal Yagnik joined Gandhi in the movement and urged the ryots to be firm. The government repression included attachment of crops, taking possession of the belongings of the ryots and their cattle and in some cases auctioning them.
- The government authorities issued instructions that revenues shall be collected only from those ryots who could afford to pay. On learning about the same, Gandhi decided to withdraw the struggle
- The three struggles led by Gandhi, demonstrated that he had understood where the Indian nation lay. It was the poor peasants and workers of all classes and castes, who constituted the pith and marrow of India, whose interests Gandhi espoused in these struggles. He had confronted both the colonialist and Indian exploiters and by entering into dialogue with them, he had demonstrated that he was a leader who could mobilize the oppressed and at the same time negotiate with the oppressors. These virtues made him the man of the masses and soon he was hailed as the Mahatma.

- Servants of India Society was founded by Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1905 to unite and train Indians of different castes, regions and religions in welfare work. It was the first secular organization in the country to devote itself to the betterment of underprivileged, rural and tribal people. The members involved themselves in relief work, the promotion of literacy, and other social causes. Members would have to go through a five-year training period and agree to serve on modest salaries. The organization has its headquarters in Pune (Maharashtra) and notable branches in Chennai (Madras), Mumbai (Bombay), Allahabad and Nagpur.

### **Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms**

- Edwin Montagu and Chelmsford, the Secretary of State for India and Viceroy respectively, announced their scheme of constitutional changes for India which came to be known as the Indian Councils Act of 1919. The Act enlarged the provincial legislative councils with elected majorities. The governments in the provinces were given more share in the administration under 'Dyarchy.' Under this arrangement all important subjects like law and order and finance 'reserved' for the whitemen and were directly under the control of the Governors. Other subjects such as health, educations and local self-government were 'transferred' to elected Indian representatives. Ministers holding 'transferred subjects' were responsible to the legislatures; but those in-charge of 'reserved' subjects were not further the Governor of the province could overrule the ministers under 'special (veto) powers,' thus making a mockery of the entire scheme. The part dealing with central legislature in the act created two houses of legislature (bi-cameral).
- The Central Legislative Assembly was to have 41 nominated members, out of a total of 144. The Upper House known as the Council of States was to have 60 members, of whom 26 were to be nominated. Both the houses had no control over the Governor General and his Executive Council. But the Central Government had full control over the provincial governments. As a result, power was concentrated in the hands of the European / English authorities. Right to vote also continued to be restricted.

- The public spirited men of India, who had extended unconditional support to the war efforts of Britain had expected more. The scheme, when announced in 1918, came to be criticized throughout India. The Indian National Congress met in a special session at Bombay in August 1918 to discuss the scheme. The congress termed the scheme 'disappointing and unsatisfactory.'
- The colonial government followed a 'carrot and stick policy.' There was a group of moderate / liberal political leaders who wanted to try and work the reforms. Led by Surendranath Banerjee, they opposed the majority opinion and left the Congress to form their own party which came to be called Indian Liberal Federation.

### **The Non-Brahmin Movement**

- The hierarchical Indian society and the contradictions within, found expression in the formation of caste associations and movements to question the dominance of higher castes. The higher castes also were controlling the factors of production and thus the middle and lower castes were dependent on them for livelihood. Liberalism and humanism which influenced and accompanied the socio-religious reform movements of the nineteenth century had affected the society and stirred it. The symptoms of their awakening were already visible in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Namasudra movement in the Bengal and eastern India, the Adidharma movement in North Western India, the Satyashodhak movement in Western India and the Dravidian movements in South India had emerged and raised their voice by the turn of the century. They were all led by non Brahmin leaders who questioned the supremacy of the Brahmins and other 'superior' castes.
- It first manifested itself, through Jyoti Rao Phule's book of 1872 titled *Gulamgiri*. His organization, Satyashodak Samaj, underscored the necessity to relieve the lower castes from the tyranny of Brahminism and the exploitative scriptures. The colonial administrators and the educational institutions that were established indirectly facilitated their origin. Added to the growing influence of Brahmin - upper caste men in the colonial times in whatever opportunity was open to natives, the colonial government published census reports once a decade. These reports classified castes on the basis of 'social

precedence as recognized by native public opinion'. The censuses were a source of conflict between castes. There were claims and counterclaims as the leaders of caste organizations fought for pre-eminence and many started new caste associations. These attempts were further helped by the emerging political scenario.

- Leading members of castes realized that it was important to mobilise their castes in struggles for social recognition. More than the recognition, many of them, as years passed by, started providing for education of their caste brethren and helped their educated youth in getting jobs. In the meantime, introduction of electoral politics from the 1880s gave a fillip to such organisations. The outcome of all this was the expression of socio-economic tensions through caste consciousness and caste solidarity.
- Two trends emerged out of the non- Brahmin movements. One was what is called the process of 'Sanskritisation' of the 'lower' castes and the second was a radical pro-poor and progressive peasant-labour movements. While the northern and eastern caste movements by and large were Sanskritic, the western and southern movements split and absorbed by the rising nationalist and Dravidian-Left movements. However all these movements were critical of what they called as 'Brahmin domination' and attacked their 'monopoly', and pleaded with the government through their associations for justice. In Bombay and Madras presidencies clear-cut Brahmin monopoly in the government services and general cultural arena led to non-Brahmin politics.
- The pattern of the movement in south was a little different. The Brahmin monopoly was quite formidable as with only 3.2% of the population they had 72% of all graduates. They came to be challenged by educated and trading community members of the non-Brahmin castes. They were elitist in the beginning and their challenge was articulated by the Non- Brahmin Manifesto issued at the end of 1916. They asserted that they formed the 'bulk of the tax payers, including a large majority of the zamindars, landlords and agriculturists', yet they received no benefits from the state.

- The colonial government made use of the genuine grievances of the non-Brahmins to divide and rule India. This was true with the Brahmanetara Parishat, and the Justice Party of Bombay and Madras presidencies respectively at least till 1930. Both the regions had some socially radical possibilities as could be seen in the emergence of a radical Dalit-Bahujan movement under the leadership of Dr Ambedkar and the Self-Respect Movement under the leadership of Periyar Ramaswamy.
- The nationalists were unable to understand the liberal democratic content in the awakening among the lower strata of Indian society. While a section of the nationalists simply ignored the stirrings, a majority of them and particularly the so-called extremists-radicals were opposed to the movements. A few of them were even hostile and labelled them as stooges of British, anti-national etc. The early leaders of the non- Brahmin movement were in fact using the same tactics as the early nationalist leaders in dealing with the colonial government.

## **Non-cooperation Movement**

### **(a) Rowlatt Act**

- It was as part of the British policy of 'rally the moderates and isolate the extremists' that the Indian Councils Act 1919 and the Rowlatt Act of the same year were promulgated. Throughout the World War, the repressive measures against the terrorists and revolutionaries had continued. Many of them were hanged or imprisoned for long terms. As the general mood was restive, the government decided to arm itself with more repressive powers. Despite every elected member of the central legislature opposing the bill, the government passed the Rowlatt Act in March 1919. This Act empowered the government to imprison any person without trial.
- Gandhi and his associates were shocked. It was the 'Satyagraha Sabha' founded by Gandhi, which pledged to disobey the Act first. In the place of the old agitational methods such as meetings, boycott of foreign cloth and schools, picketing of toddy shops, petitions and demonstrations, a novel method was adopted. Now 'Satyagraha' was the weapon to be used with the wider participation of labour, artisan

and peasant masses. The symbol of this change was to be khadi, which soon became the uniform of nationalists. India's Swaraj would be a reality only when the masses awakened and became active in political work. Almost the entire country was electrified when Gandhi called upon the people to observe 'hartal' in March-April 1919 against the Rowlatt Act. He combined it with the Khilafat issue which brought together Hindus and Muslims.

### **(b) Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre**

- The colonial government was enraged at the mass struggles and the enthusiasm of the masses as evidenced in the upsurge all over the country. On 13<sup>th</sup> April 1919, in Amritsar town, in the Jallianwala enclave that the most heinous of political crimes was perpetrated on an unarmed mass of people by the British regime. More than two thousand people had assembled at the venue to peacefully protest against the arrest of their leaders Satyapal and Saifudding Kitchlew. Michael O'Dwyer was the Lt. Governor of Punjab and the military commander was General Reginald Dyer. They decided to demonstrate their power and teach a lesson to the dissenters. The part where the gathering was held had only one narrow entrance. Dyer ordered firing on the trapped crowd with machine guns and rifles till the ammunition was exhausted. While the official figures of the dead was only about 379 the real number was over a thousand. Martial law was imposed all over Punjab and people were subject to untold indignities.
- The entire country was horrified at the brutalities. In Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Lahore there were widespread protests against the Rowlatt Act where the protesters were fired upon. There was violence in many towns and cities. Protesting against the brutalities many celebrities renounced their titles, of whom Ravindranath Tagore was one.

Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood immediately after the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre. In his protest letter to the viceroy on May 31, 1919, Tagore wrote "The time has come when the badge of honour makes our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation, and, I for my part, wish to stand shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who for their so-called insignificance are



liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings."

- The two immediate causes responsible for launching the non-cooperation movement were the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs. While the khilafat issue related to the position of the Turkish Sultan vis-a- vis the holy places of Islam, the Punjab issue related to the exoneration of the perpetrators of the Jallianwala massacre. While the control over holy places of Islam was taken over by non-Islamic powers against the assurances of the British rulers, the British courts of enquiry totally exonerated Reginald Dyer and Michael O'Dwyer of the crime perpetrated at Jallianwala.
- Gandhi and the Congress, who were bent upon Hindu-Muslim unity, now stood by their Muslim compatriots who felt betrayed by the British regime. The Ali brothers - Shukha and Muhammed - and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were the prime movers in the Khilafat movement.

A Sikh teenager who was raised at Khalsa Orphanage named Udham Singh saw the happening in his own eyes. To avenge the killings of Jallianwalla Bagh, on 30 March 1940, he assassinated Michael O'Dwyer in Caxton Hall of London. Udham Singh was hanged at Pentonville jail, London

### **(c) Launch of Non-Cooperation Movement**

- The Khilafat Conference, at the instance of Gandhi, decided to launch the non-cooperation movement from 31 August 1920. Earlier an all party meet at Allahabad had decided on a programme of boycott of government educational institutions and their law courts. The Congress met in a special session at Calcutta in September 1920 and resolved to accept Gandhi's proposal on non-cooperation with the colonial state till such time as Khilafat and Punjab grievances were redressed and self-government established.
- Non-cooperation movement included boycott of schools, colleges, courts, government offices, legislatures, foreign goods, return of government conferred titles and awards. Alternatively, national schools, panchayats were to be set up and swadeshi goods

manufactured and used. The struggle at a later stage was to include no tax campaign and mass civil disobedience, etc. A regular Congress session held at Nagpur in 1920 endorsed the earlier resolutions. Another important resolution at Nagpur was to recognize and set up linguistic Provincial Congress Committees which drew a large number of workers into the movement. In order to broad base the Congress, the workers were to reach out to the villages and enroll the villagers in the Congress on a nominal fee of four annas (25 paise). The overall character of the Congress underwent change and an atmosphere where a large majority of the masses could develop a sense of belonging to the nation and the national struggle developed. But it also led to some conservatives who were opposed to mass participation in the struggle to leave the Congress. Thus the Congress under Gandhi was shedding its elitist character, becoming a mass organization and in a real sense 'National'.

#### **(d) Impact of Gandhi's Leadership**

- Thousands of schools and hundreds of colleges and vidyapeethas were established by the natives as alternatives to the government institutions. Several leading lawyers gave up their practice. Thousands of school and college students left the government institutions. The Ali brothers were arrested and jailed on sedition charges. The Congress committees called upon people to launch civil disobedience movement, including no tax movements if the Congress committees of their region were ready. The government as usual resorted to repression. Workers were arrested indiscriminately and put behind bars. The visit of Prince of Wales in 1921 to several cities in India was also boycotted. The calculation of the colonial government that the visit of the Prince would evoke loyal sentiments of the Indian people was proved wrong. Workers and peasants had gone on strike across the country. Gandhi promised Swaraj, if Indians participated in the non-cooperation movement on non-violent mode within a year.
- South India surged forward during this phase of the struggle. The peasants of Andhra, withheld payment of taxes to the zamindars and the whole population of Chirala-Perala refused to pay taxes and vacated the town en-mass. Hundreds of village Patels and Shanbogues resigned their jobs. Non-Cooperation movement in

Tamil Nadu was organised and led by stalwarts like C. Rajagopalachari, S. Satyamurthi and Periyar E.V.R. In Kerala, peasants organized anti-jenmi struggles.

- The Viceroy admitted in a letter to the Secretary of State that the movement had seriously affected lower classes in certain areas of UP, Bengal, Assam, Bihar and Orissa the peasants have been affected. Impressed by the intensity of the movement, in a special session the Congress reiterated the intensification of the movement. In February 1922 Gandhi announced that he would lead a mass civil disobedience, including no tax campaigns, at Bardoli, if the government did not ensure press freedom and release the prisoners within seven days.

#### **(e) Chauri Chaura Incident and Withdrawal of the Movement**

- The common people and the nationalist workers were exuberant that Swaraj would dawn soon and participated actively in the struggle. It had attracted all classes of people including the tribals living in the jungles. But at the same time sporadic violence was also witnessed along with arson. In Malabar and Andhra two very violent revolts also took place. In the Rampa region of coastal Andhra the tribals revolted under the leadership of Alluri Sitarama Raju. In Malabar, Muslim (Mapilla) peasants rose up in armed rebellion against upper caste landholders and the British government.
- Chauri-Chaura, a village in Gorakhpur district of UP had an organized volunteer group which was participating and leading the picketing of liquor shops and local bazaar against high prices. On 5 February 1922, a Congress procession, 3000 strong, was fired upon by police. Enraged by the firing, the mob attacked and burnt down the police station. 22 policemen lost their lives. It was this incident which made Gandhi announce the suspension of the non-cooperation movement.
- The Congress Working Committee ratified the decision at Bardoli, to the disappointment of the nationalist workers. While the younger workers resented the decision, the others who had faith in Gandhi considered it a tactical retreat. Both Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas

Bose were critical of Gandhi, who was arrested and sentenced to 6 years in prison. Thus ended the non-cooperation movement.

- The Khilafat issue was made redundant when the people of Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kamal Pasha rose in revolt and stripped the Sultan of his political power and abolished the Caliphate and declared that religion and politics could not go together.

### **Swarajist Party and its Activities**

- Following the suspension of Non-cooperation the question was what next? Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru proposed a new line of activity. They wanted to return to active politics which included entry into electoral politics and demonstrate that the nationalists were capable of obstructing the working of the reformed legislature by capturing them and arousing nationalist spirit. This group came to be called the 'Swarajists and pro-changers'. In Tamil Nadu, Satyamurti joined this group.
- There was another group which opposed council entry and wanted to continue the Gandhian line by mobilizing the masses. This team led by Rajagopalachari, Vallabhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad was called 'No changers.' They argued that electoral politics would divert the attention of nationalists and pull them away from the work of mass mobilization and their issues. They favoured the continuation of the Gandhian constructive programme of spinning, temperance, Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability and mobilise rural masses and prepare them for new mass movements. The pro-changers launched the Swarajya party as a part of the Congress. A truce was soon worked out and both the groups would engage themselves in the Congress programmes and their work should complement each other's activities under the leadership of Gandhi, though Gandhi personally favoured constructive work.
- The Swarajya party did reasonably well in the elections to Central Assembly by winning 42 of the 101 seats open for election. With the cooperation of other members they were able to stall many anti-people legislations of the colonial regime, and were successful in exposing the inadequacy of the Act of 1919. But their efforts and enthusiasm petered out as time passed by and consciously or

unconsciously they came to be co-opted by the Government as members of several committees constituted by it.

- In the absence of nationalist mass struggle, fissiparous tendencies started rising their head. There were a series of communal riots with fundamentalist elements occupying the space. Even the Swaraj party was affected by the sectarianism as one group in the name of 'responsivists' started cooperating with the government, claiming to safeguard "Hindu interests". The Muslim fundamentalists similarly seized the space created by the lull in national struggle and started fanning communal feeling. Rise of Left Radicalism Gandhi was pained at the developments. To contain the communal frenzy he went on a 21 day fast.

### Left Movement

- Meanwhile socialist ideas and its activists also had filled some space through their work among peasants and workers. The labour and peasant movements were organized by the 'leftists'. Marxism as an ideology to criticise colonialism and capitalism had gained ground. It manifested itself in the organization of students and youth apart from trade unions. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose contributed to the spread of leftist ideology. They argued that both colonial exploitation and the internal exploitation by the emerging capitalists should be fought. A group of youngsters with S A. Dange, M.N Roy, Muzaffar Ahmed along with elderly persons such as Singaravelu from Tamilnadu founded the peasants and worker's parties. The government came down heavily on the communist-socialists and the revolutionaries a series of 'conspiracy cases' such as Kanpur, Meerut, Kakori were booked.
- It was at this juncture Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekar Azad, Rajguru and Sukhdev emerged on the scene. The Naujawan Bharat Sabha, Hindustan Republican Association were started and thousands of youngmen and women became active anti-colonialists and revolutionaries. Youth and student conferences were organized all over the country. Meanwhile Ramprasad Bismil and Ashfaq-ullah were convicted to death and 17 others were sentenced to long term imprisonment in the Kakori conspiracy case. Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekar Azad and Rajguru, enraged at the police brutality

and death of Lajpat Rai, killed Saunders, the British police officer who led the lathi charge at Lahore. Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutt threw a bomb into the central Assembly hall on 8 April 1929. In 1929 the Meerut conspiracy case was filed and three dozen communist leaders were sentenced to long spells of jail terms. All these developments and incidents are discussed in detail in the next lesson.

### **Simon Commission- Nehru Report - Lahore Congress**

- The British were due to consider and announce another instalment of constitutional reforms some time in 1929–30. In preparation, it announced the setting up of Indian Statutory commission (known as 'Simon Commission' after its chairman). The commission had only whitemen as members and it was an insult to Indians. The Congress at its annual session in Madras in 1927 resolved to boycott the commission. The Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha also supported the decision. A series of conferences were held and the consensus was to work for an alternative proposal. Most of the parties agreed to challenge the colonial attitude towards India and the result was the Motilal Nehru Report. However the All- Parties meet held in 1928 December at Calcutta failed to accept it on the issue of communal representation.

### **Simon Go Back**

- But the most important development was the popular protest against the Simon Commission. Whenever the commission went protests were held and the slogan 'Simon Go Back' rent the air. The movement demonstrated that the masses were gearing up for the next stage of the struggle. It was at Calcutta that the Congress met in December 1928. To conciliate the left wing it was announced that Jawaharlal would be the President of the next session in 1929. Thus Jawaharlal Nehru, son of Motilal Nehru, who presided over Congress in 1928, succeeded his father.

### **Lahore Congress Session-Purna Swaraj**

- Lahore session of the Congress has a special significance in the history of the freedom movement. It was at the Lahore session that the Congress declared that the objective of the Congress was the

attainment of complete independence. On 31 December 1929 the tricolour flag of freedom was hoisted at Lahore. It was also decided that 26 January would be celebrated as the Independence day every year.

- It was also announced that civil disobedience would be started under the leadership of Gandhi

### **Dandi March**

- As a part of the movement Gandhi announced the 'Dandi March'. It was a protest against the unjust tax on salt, which is used by all. But the colonial government was taxing it and had a near monopoly over it. The Dandi March was to cover 375 kms from Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi on the Gujarat coast. Joined by a chosen band of 78 followers from all regions and social groups, after informing the colonial government in advance, Gandhi set out on the march and reached Dandi on the 25th day i.e. 6 April 1930. Throughout the period of the march the press covered the event in such a way that it had caught the attention of the entire world. He broke the salt law by picking up a fist full of salt. It was symbolic of the refusal of Indians to be under the repressive colonial government and its unjust laws.

### **Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha**

- In Tamilnadu, a salt march was led by Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) to Vedaranyam. Vedaranyam, situated 150 miles from Tiruchirapalli from where march started was an obscure coastal village in Thanjavur district. Rajaji had just been elected president of the Tamilnadu Congress. The march started on 13th April and reached Vedaranyam on 28th April 1930.
- The Thanjavur collector J.A Thorne had warned the public of severe action if the marchers were harboured. But the Satyagrahis were warmly welcomed and provided with food and shelter. Those who dared to offer food and shelter were severely dealt with. The Satyagrahis marched via Kumbakonam, Semmangudi, Thiruthuraiipoondi where they were given good reception.

- The Vedaranyam movement stirred the masses in south India and awakened them to the colonial oppression and the need to join the struggle.

### The Round Table Conferences

- The Simon Commission had submitted the report to the government. The Congress, Muslim league and Hindu Mahasabha had boycotted it. The British regime went ahead with the consideration of the report. But in the absence of consultations with Indian leaders it would have been useless. In order to secure some legitimacy and credibility to the report, the government announced that it would convene a Round Table Conference (RTC) in London with leaders of different shades of Indian opinion. But the Congress decided to boycott it, on the issue of granting independence. Everyone knew, more so the government, that it would be an exercise in futility if the Congress did not participate.
- Thus negotiations with Congress were started and the Gandhi-Irwin pact was signed on March 5, 1931. It marked the end of civil disobedience in India. The movement had generated worldwide publicity, and Viceroy Irwin was looking for a way to end it. Gandhi was released from custody in January 1931, and the two men began negotiating the terms of the pact. In the end, Gandhi pledged to give up the *satyagraha* campaign, and Irwin agreed to release tens of thousands of Indians who had been jailed during the movement.
- That year Gandhi attended the Second Round Table Conference in London as the sole representative of the Congress. The government agreed to allow people to make salt for their consumption, release political prisoners who had not indulged in violence, and permitted the picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops. The Karachi Congress ratified the Gandhi-Irwin pact. However the Viceroy refused to commute the death sentence of Bhagat Singh and his comrades.
- Gandhi attended the Second RTC but the government was adamant and declined to concede his demands. He returned empty handed and the Congress resolved on renewing the civil disobedience movement. The economic depression had worsened the condition of the people in general and of the peasants in particular. There were



peasant protests all over the country. The leftists were in the forefront of the struggles of the workers and peasants. The government was determined to crush the movement. All key leaders including Nehru, Khan Abdul Gafar Khan and finally Gandhi were all arrested. The Congress was banned. Special laws were enacted to crush the agitations. Over a lakh of protesters were arrested and literature relating to nationalism was also declared illegal and confiscated. It was a reign of terror that was unleashed on the unarmed masses participating in the movement. The movement started waning and it was officially suspended in May 1933 and withdrawn in May 1934.

### **Emergence of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the Separate Electorates**

- Dr. Ambedkar came to the centre stage of the struggles of the oppressed world in the 1920's. Born in the then so-called "untouchable" caste called Mahar in Central India as the son of an army man, he was a brilliant student and was the first to matriculate from his community.

### **Ambedkar's Academic Accomplishments**

- Ambedkar joined the Elphinston College, with the help of a scholarship and graduated in 1912. With the help of a scholarship from the Maharaja of Barona he went to United States and secured a post-graduate degree, and doctorate, from the Columbia University. Then he went to London to study law and economics.
- Ambedkar's brilliance caught the attention of many. Already in 1916, he had participated in an international conference of Anthropology and presented a research paper on 'Castes in India', which was published later in the *Indian Antiquary*. The British government which was searching for talents among the downtrodden of India invited him to interact with the Southborough or the Franchise Committee which was collecting evidence on the quantum and qualifications to be fixed for the Indian voters.
- It was in these interactions that Ambedkar first spoke about separate electorates. He argued the untouchables be given separate electorates and reserved seats. Under this scheme only untouchables could vote in the constituencies reserved for them. Ambedkar felt that if any

untouchable candidate contesting elections were to depend on non-untouchable voters he or she would be more obliged to the latter and would not therefore be in a position to work at freely for the good of the untouchables. If only untouchable voters were to vote and elect in the reserved seats, those elected would be their real representatives.

### **Ambedkar's Activism**

- Ambedkar launched news journals and organizations. Mook Nayak (leader of the dumb) was the journal to articulate his views and the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha (Association for the welfare of excluded) spearheaded his activities. As a member of the Bombay legislative council he worked tirelessly to secure removal of disabilities imposed on untouchables. He launched the 'Mahad Satyagraha' to establish the civic right of the untouchables to public tanks and wells. Ambedkar's intellectual and public activities drew the attention of all concerned. His intellectual attacks were directed against leaders of the Indian National Congress and the colonial bureaucracy. In the meanwhile the struggle for freedom under Congress and Gandhi's leadership had reached a decisive phase with their declaration that their objective was to fight for complete independence or 'Purna Swaraj'

### **Ambedkar on Separate Electorate for "Untouchables"**

- Ambedkar was concerned about the future of "untouchables" and the oppressed in an independent India which was certain to be under the control of Congress under the hegemony of the caste Hindus. He renewed his demand for separate electorates, be it before the All-Parties conference or the Simon commission or at the Round Table Conference. The Congress and Gandhi were worried that separate electorates for untouchables would further weaken the national movement, as separate electorates to Muslims, Anglo Indians and other special interests had helped the British to successfully pursue its divide and rule policy. Gandhi feared that the separation of untouchables from other Hindus politically would also have its social impact.

## Communal Award

- A meeting between Gandhi and Ambedkar on this issue of separate electorates before they went to London to attend the Second Round Table Conference ended in failure. There was an encounter between the two again in the RTC about the same issue. It ended in a deadlock and finally the issue was left to be arbitrated by the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. The British government announced in August 1932 what came to be known as the Communal Award. Ambedkar's demands for separate electorates with reserved seats were conceded.

## Poona Pact

- Gandhi was deeply upset. He declared that he would resist separate electorates to untouchables 'with his life'. He went on a fast unto death in the Yervada jail where he was imprisoned. There was enormous pressure on Ambedkar to save Gandhi's life. Consultations, confabulations, meetings, prayers were held all over and ultimately after a meeting with Gandhi in the jail, the communal award was modified. The new agreement, between Ambedkar and Gandhians, called the 'Poona Pact' was signed.
- The Poona Pact took away separate electorates but guaranteed reserved seats for the untouchables. The provision of reserved seats was incorporated in the constitutional changes which were made. It was also built into the Constitution of independent India.

## Ambedkar and Party Politics

- Ambedkar launched two political parties. The first one was the Independent Labour party in 1937 and the second Scheduled Caste Federation in 1942. The colonial government recognizing his struggles and also to balance its support base used the services of Ambedkar. Thus he was made a member of the Defence Advisory Committee in 1942, and a few months later, a minister in the Viceroy's cabinet.
- The crowning recognition of his services to the nation was electing him as the chairman of the Drafting Committee of the independent

India's Constitution. After independence Ambedkar was invited to be a member of the Nehru cabinet.

.....



## UNIT 5. Period of radicalism in Anti-imperialist Struggles

### Introduction

- The influence of the Left-wing in the Indian National Congress and consequently on the struggle for independence was felt in a significant manner from the late 1920s. The Communist Party of India (CPI) was formed, by M.N. Roy, Abani Mukherji, M.P.T. Acharya, Mohammad Ali and Mohammad Shafiq, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan then in the Soviet Union in October 1920. This opened a new radical era in the anti-imperialist struggles in India.
- Even though there were many radical groups functioning in India earlier the presence of a Communist state in the form of USSR greatly alarmed the British in India. The first batch of radicals reached Peshawar on 3 June 1921. They were arrested immediately under the charges of being Bolshevik (Russian communist agents) coming to India to create troubles. A series of five conspiracy cases were instituted against them between the years 1922 and 1927. The first of these was the Peshawar Conspiracy case. This was followed by the Kanpur (Bolshevik) Conspiracy case in (1924) and the most famous, the Meerut Conspiracy case (1929). Meanwhile, the CPI was formally founded on Indian soil in 1925 in Bombay.
- Various revolutionary groups were functioning then in British India, adopting socialist ideas but were not communist parties. Two revolutionaries - Bhagat Singh of the Hindustan Revolutionary Socialist Association and Kalpana Dutt of the Indian Republican Army that organised repeated raids on the Chittagong Armoury in Bengal will be the focus of the next section. The Karachi Session of the INC and its famous resolutions especially on Fundamental Rights and Duties is dealt with next. The last two topics are about the world-wide economic depression popularly known as Great Depression and its impact on India and Tamil Society and the Industrial Development registered in India in its aftermath. The Great Depression dealt a

severe blow to the labour force and peasants and consequently influenced the struggle for independence in a significant way.

### **Kanpur Conspiracy Case, 1924**

- The colonial administrators did not take the spread of communist ideas lightly. Radicalism spread across the British Provinces – Bombay, Calcutta and Madras - and industrial centres like Kanpur in United Province (UP) and cities like Lahore where factories had come up quite early. As a result, trade unions emerged in the jute and cotton textile industries, the railway companies across the country and among workers in the various municipal bodies. In order to curb the radicalisation of politics, especially to check what was then called Bolshevism, repressive measures were adopted by the British administration. The Kanpur Conspiracy case of 1924 was one such move. Those charged with the conspiracy were communists and trade unionists.
- The accused were arrested spread over a period of six months. Eight of them were charged under Section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code – ‘to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty of British India, by complete separation of India from imperialistic Britain by a violent revolution’, and sent to various jails. The case came before Sessions Judge H.E. Holmes who had earned notoriety while serving as Sessions Judge of Gorakhpur for awarding death sentence to 172 peasants for their involvement in the Chauri Chaura case.
- In the Kanpur Conspiracy case, Muzaffar Ahmed, Shaukat Usmani, Nalini Gupta and S. A. Dange were sent to jail, for four years of rigorous imprisonment. The trial and the imprisonment, meanwhile, led to some awareness about the communist activities in India. A Communist Defence Committee was formed in British India to raise funds and engage lawyers for the defence of the accused. Apart from these, the native press in India reported the court proceedings extensively.
- The trial in the conspiracy case and the imprisonment of some of the leaders rather than kill the spirit of the radicals gave a fillip to communist activities. In December 1925, a Communist Conference of different communist groups, from all over India, was

held. Singaravelu Chettiar from Tamil Nadu took part in this conference. It was from there that the Communist Party of India was established, formally, with Bombay as its Headquarters.

13 persons were originally accused in the Kanpur case: (1) M.N. Roy, (2) Muzaffar Ahmad, (3) Shaukat Usmani, (4) Ghulam Hussain, (5) S.A. Dange, (6) M. Singaravelu, (7) R.L. Sharma, (8) Nalini Gupta, (9) Shamuddin Hassan, (10) M.R.S Velayudhun, (11) Doctor Manilal, (12) Sampurnananda, (13) Satyabhakta. 8 persons were charge-sheeted: M.N. Roy, Muzaffar Ahmad, S.A. Dange, Nalini Gupta, Ghulam Hussain, Singaravelu, Shaukat Usmani, and R.L. Sharma. Ghulam Hussain turned an approver. M.N. Roy and R.L. Sharma were charged in absentia as they were in Germany and Pondicherry (a French Territory) respectively. Singaravelu was released on bail due to his ill health. Finally the list got reduced to four.

M. Singaravelu (18 February 1860 - 11 February 1946), was born in Madras. He was an early Buddhist, and like many other communist leaders, he was also associated with Indian National Congress initially. However, after sometime he chose a radical path. Along with Thiru. V. Kalyanasundaram, he organised many trade unions in South India. On 1 May 1923, he organised the first ever celebration of May Day in the country. He was one of the main organisers of the strike in South Indian Railways (Golden Rock, Tiruchirappalli) in 1928 and was prosecuted for that.

## **Meerut Conspiracy Case, 1929**

### **Communist Activities**

- The Meerut Conspiracy Case of 1929, was, perhaps, the most famous of all the communist conspiracy cases instituted by the British Government. The late 1920s witnessed a number of labour upsurges and this period of unrest extended into the decade of the Great Depression (1929-1939). Trade unionism spread over to many urban centres and organised labour strikes. The communists played a prominent role in organising the working class throughout this period. The Kharagpur Railway workshop strikes in February and September 1927, the Liluah Rail workshop strike between January

and July 1928, the Calcutta scavengers' strike in 1928, the several strikes in the jute mills in Bengal during July-August 1929, the strike at the Golden Rock workshop of the South Indian Railway, Tiruchirappalli, in July 1928, the textile workers' strike in Bombay in April 1928 are some of the strikes that deserve mention.

### **Government Repression**

- Alarmed by this wave of strikes and the spread of communist activities, the British Government brought two draconian Acts - the Trade Disputes Act, 1928 and the Public Safety Bill, 1928. These Acts armed the government with powers to curtail civil liberties in general and suppress the trade union activities in particular. The government was worried about the strong communist influence among the workers and peasants.
- Determined to wipe out the radical movement, the government resorted to several repressive measures. They arrested 32 leading activists of the Communist Party, from different parts of British India like Bombay, Calcutta, Punjab, Poona and United Provinces. Most of them were trade union activists though not all of them were members of the Communist Party of India. At least eight of them belonged to the Indian National Congress. The arrested also included three British communists-Philip Spratt, Ban Bradley and Lester Hutchinson - who had been sent by the Communist Party of Great Britain to help build the party in India. Like those arrested in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case they were charged under Section 121A of the Indian Penal Code. All the 32 leaders arrested were brought to Meerut (in United Province then) and jailed. A good deal of documents that the colonial administration described as 'subversive material,' like books, letters, and pamphlets were seized and produced as evidence against the accused.

The British government conceived of conducting the trial in Meerut (and not, for instance in Bombay from where a large chunk of the accused hailed) so that they could get away with the obligations of a jury trial. They feared a jury trial could create sympathy for the accused.



## **Trial and Punishment**

- Meanwhile, a National Meerut Prisoners' Defence Committee was formed to coordinate defence in the case. Famous Indian lawyers like K.F. Nariman and M.C. Chagla appeared in the court on behalf of the accused. Even national leaders like Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru visited the accused in jail. All these show the importance of the case in the history of our freedom struggle.
- The Sessions Court in Meerut awarded stringent sentences on 16 January 1933, four years after the arrests in 1929. 27 were convicted and sentenced to various duration of transportation. During the trial, the Communists made use of their defence as a platform for propaganda by making political statements. These were reported widely in the newspapers and thus lakhs of people came to know about the communist ideology and the communist activities in India. There were agitations against the conviction. That three British nationals were also accused in the case, the case became known internationally too. Most importantly, even Romain Rolland and Albert Einstein raised their voice in support of the convicted.
- Under the national and international pressure, on appeal, the sentences were considerably reduced in July 1933.

## **Bhagat Singh and Kalpana Dutt**

### **Bhagat Singh's Background**

- Bhagat Singh represented a distinct strand of nationalism. His radical strand complemented, in a unique way, to the overall ideals of the freedom movement.
- Bhagat Singh was born to Kishan Singh (father) and Vidyavati Kaur (mother) on 28 September 1907 in Jaranwala, Lyallpur district, Punjab, now a part of Pakistan. His father was a liberal and his family was a family of freedom fighters. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre happened when Bhagat Singh was 14 years. Early in his youth, he was associated with the Naujawan Bharat Sabha and the Hindustan Republican Association. The latter organisation was founded by Sachin Sanyal and Jogesh Chatterji. It was reorganised subsequently

in September 1928 as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (H.S.R.A) by Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Socialist ideals and the October Revolution in Russia of 1917 were large influences on these revolutionaries. Bhagat Singh was one of the leaders of the H.S.R.A along with Chandrashekhar Azad, Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar.

“I began to study. My previous faith and convictions underwent a remarkable modification. The romance of the violent methods alone which was so prominent among our predecessors was replaced by serious ideas. No more mysticism, no more blind faith. Realism became our cult. Use of force justifiable when resorted to as a matter of terrible necessity: non-violence as a policy indispensable for all mass movements. So much about methods. The most important thing was the clear conception of the ideal for which we were to fight..... from Bhagat Singh’s “Why I am an Atheist”.

### **Bhagat Singh’s Bomb Throwing**

- The image that comes to our mind at the very mention of Bhagat Singh’s name is that of the bomb he threw in the Central Legislative Assembly on April 8, 1929. The bombs did not kill anybody. It was intended as a demonstrative action, an act of protest against the draconian laws of the British. They chose the day on which the Trade Disputes Bill, an anti-labour legislation was introduced in the assembly.

### **Lahore Conspiracy Case**

- Bhagat Singh along with Rajguru, Sukhdev, Jatindra Nath Das and 21 others were arrested and tried for the murder of Saunders (the case was known as the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case). Jatindra Nath Das died in the jail after 64 days of hunger strike against the discriminatory practices and poor conditions in jail. The verdict in the bomb throwing case had been suspended until the trial of Lahore Conspiracy trials was over. It was in this case that Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were sentenced to death on 7 October 1930.
- A letter from them to the Governor of Punjab shows their courage and their optimism over the future of India even while facing death

for the cause of freedom of their country. It says, 'the days of capitalism and imperialism are numbered. The war neither began with us nor is going to end with our lives... According to the verdict of your court we had waged a war and we are therefore war prisoners. And we claim to be treated as such i.e., we claim to be shot dead instead of being hanged.'

- Some narratives describe Bhagat Singh and his fellow patriots as terrorists. This is a misconception. The legendary Bhagat Singh clarified how his group is different from the terrorists. He said, during his trial, that revolution is not just the cult of bomb and pistol... Revolution is the inalienable right of mankind. Freedom is the imperishable birth-right of all. The labourer is the real sustainer of society.. To the altar of this revolution we have brought our youth as incense, for no sacrifice is too great for so magnificent a cause.' Symbolically, they also shouted Inquilab Zindabad after this defence statement of his in the court.
- Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged early in the morning of March 23, 1931 in the Lahore Jail. They faced the gallows with courage, shouting Inquilab Zindabad and Down with British Imperialism until their last breath. The history of freedom struggle is incomplete without the revolutionary strand of nationalism and the ultimate sacrifice of these revolutionaries. One more name in the list of such fighters is Kalpana Dutt.

### **Kalpana Dutt (1913–1995)**

- In the late 1920s a young woman, Kalpana Dutt (known as Kalpana Joshi after her marriage to the communist leader P.C. Joshi), fired the patriotic imagination of young people by her daring raid of the Chittagong armoury.
- To understand the heroism of Kalpana Dutt, you should understand the revolutionary strand of nationalism that attracted women like her to these ideals. You have already learnt that there existed many revolutionary groups in British India. The character of these organisations gradually changed from being ones that practiced

individual annihilation to organising collective actions aimed at larger changes in the system.

- As Surya Sen, the revolutionary leader of Chittagong armoury raid, told Ananda Gupta, 'a dedicated band of youth must show the path of organised armed struggle in place of individual action. Most of us will have to die in the process but our sacrifice for such noble cause will not go in vain.' When revolutionary groups like the Yugantar and the Anushilan Samiti began stagnating in the mid-1920s, new groups sprang out of them. Among them, the most important group was the one led by Surya Sen, a school teacher by profession, in Bengal. He had actively participated in the Non-cooperation movement and wore Khadi. His group was closely working with the Chittagong unit of the Indian National Congress.

The H.S.R.A was a renewed chapter of the Hindustan Republican Association. Its aim was the overthrow of the capitalist and imperialist government and establish a socialist society through a revolution. The H.S.R.A involved a number of actions such as the murder of Saunders in Lahore. In that, Saunders was mistaken for the Superintendent of Police, Lahore, James A. Scott who was responsible for seriously assaulting Lajpat Rai, in December 1928, and Rai's subsequent death. They also made an attempt to blow up the train in which Lord Irwin (Governor General and Viceroy of India, 1926-1931) was travelling, in December 1929, and a large number of such actions in Punjab and UP in 1930.

### **Chittagong Armoury Raid**

- Surya Sen's revolutionary group, the Indian Republican Army, was named after the Irish Republican Army. They planned a rebellion to occupy Chittagong in a guerrilla-style operation. The Chittagong armouries were raided on the night of 18 April 1930. Simultaneous attacks were launched on telegraph offices, the armoury and the police barracks to cut off all communication networks including the railways to isolate the region. It was aimed at challenging the colonial administration directly.
- The revolutionaries hoisted the national flag and symbolically shouted slogans such as Bande Matram and Inquilab Zindabad. The raids and the resistance continued for the next three years. Often,

they operated from the villages and the villagers, gave food and shelter to the revolutionaries and suffered greatly at the hands of police for this. Due to the continuous nature of the actions, there was an Armoury Raid Supplementary Trial too. It took three years to arrest Surya Sen, in February 1933, and eleven months before he was sent to the gallows on 12 January 1934. Kalpana Dutt was among those who participated in the raids.

On 13 June 1932 in a face-to-face battle against government forces, two of the absconders of the Armoury Raid were killed, while they in turn killed Capt. Cameron, Commander of the government forces in the village of Dhalghat in the house of a poor Brahmin widow, Savitri Debi. After the incident the widow was arrested together with her children. Despite many offers and temptations, not a word could the police get out of the widow. They were uneducated and poor, yet they resisted all the temptation offers of gold and unflinchingly could bear all the tortures that were inflicted upon them.

–From Kalpana Dutt’s autobiography Chittagong Armoury Raiders’ Reminiscences.

### **Women in Action**

- While Bhagat Singh represented young men who dedicated their lives to the freedom of the country, Kalpana Dutt represented the young women who defied the existing patriarchal set up and took to arms for the liberation of their motherland. Not only did they act as messengers (as elsewhere) but they also participated in direct actions, fought along with men, carrying guns.
- Kalpana Dutt’s active participation in the revolutionary Chittagong movement led to her arrest. Tried along with Surya Sen, Kalpana was sentenced to transportation for life. The charge was “waging war against the King Emperor.” As all their activities started with the raid on the Armoury, the trial came to be known as the Chittagong Armoury Raid Trial.
- Kalpana Dutt recalls in her book Chittagong Armoury Raiders Reminiscences the revolutionary youth of Chittagong wanted “to inspire self-confidence by demonstrating that even without outside help it was possible to fight the Government.

## Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress, 1931

- The Indian National Congress, in contrast to the violent actions of revolutionaries, mobilised the masses for non-violent struggles. The Congress under the leadership of Gandhi gave priority to the problems of peasants. In the context of great agrarian distress, deepened by world-wide economic depression, the Congress mobilised the peasantry. The Congress adopted a no-rent and no-tax campaign as a part of its civil disobedience programme. Under the pressure of Great Depression, socio-economic demands were sharply articulated in its Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress.
- The freedom struggle was taking a new shape. Peasants organised themselves into Kisan Sabhas and industrial workers were organized by the trade unions, made their presence felt in a big way in the freedom struggle. The Indian National Congress had become a mass party during the 1930s. The Congress leadership, which was now taking a left turn under Nehru's leadership, began to talk about an egalitarian society based on social and economic justice.
- The Karachi session held in March 1931, presided over by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, adopted a resolution on Fundamental Rights and Duties and provided an insight into what the economic policy of an independent India. In some ways, it was the manifesto of the Indian National Congress for independent India. These rights and the social and economic programmes were derived from a firm conviction that political freedom and economic freedom were inseparable.
- Even a cursory look at the fundamental rights resolution will tell you that all the basic rights that the British denied to the Indians found a prominent place in the Resolution. The colonial government curtailed civil liberties and freedom by passing draconian acts and ordinances. Gandhian ideals and Nehru's socialist vision also found a place in the list of rights that the Indian National Congress promised to ensure in free India.

- The existing social relations, especially the caste system and the practice untouchability, were also challenged with a promise to ensure equal access to public places and institutions.
- The Fundamental Rights, in fact, found a place in the Part III of the Constitution of India- Fundamental Rights - and some of them went into Part IV, the Directive Principles of the State policy. You will study more on these in unit 13 of the second volume in the discussion on the Constitution of India.

### **The Great Depression and its Impact on India**

- The Great Depression was a severe and prolonged economic crisis which lasted for about a decade from 1929. The slowdown of the economic activities, especially industrial production, led to crises like lockouts, wage cut, unemployment and starvation. It began in North America and affected Europe and all the industrial centres in the world. As the world was integrated by the colonial order in its economic sphere, developments in one part of the world affected other parts as well.
- The crash in the Wall Street (where the American Stock Exchange was located) triggered an economic depression of great magnitude. The Depression hit India too. British colonialism aggravated the situation in India. Depression affected both industrial and agrarian sectors. Labour unrest broke out in industrial centres such as Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur, United Province and Madras against wage cuts, lay-offs and for the betterment of living conditions. In the agriculture sector, prices of the agricultural products, which depended on export markets like jute and raw cotton fell steeply. The depression brought down the value of Indian exports from Rs. 311 crores in 1929-1930 to Rs 132 crores in 1932-33. Therefore, the 1930s witnessed the emergence of the Kisan Sabhas which fought for rent reduction, relief from debt traps and even for the abolition of Zamindari.
- The only positive impact was on the Indian industrial sector that could use the availability of land at reduced prices and labour at cheap wage rates. The weakening ties with Britain and other capitalist countries created a condition where growth was recorded in some of

the Indian industries. Yet only the industries which fed the local consumption thrived.

## Industrial Development in India

- The British trade policy took a heavy toll on the indigenous industry. Industrialization of India was not part of British policy. Like other colonies, India was treated as a raw material procurement area and a market for their finished goods.
- Despite this, industrial expansion took place in India, because of certain unforeseen circumstances, first during the course of the First World War and then during the Great Depression.
- The first Indian to start a cotton mill was Cowasjee Nanabhoj Davar (1815–73), a Parsi, in Bombay in 1854. This was known as the Bombay Spinning and Weaving Company. The city's leading traders, mostly Parsis, contributed to this endeavour. The American Civil War (1861–65) was a boon to the cotton farmers. But after the Civil War when Britain continued to import cotton from America, Indian cotton cultivators came to grief. But Europeans started textile mills in India, taking advantage of the cheapness of cotton available. Ahmedabad textiles mills were established by Indian entrepreneurs and both Ahmedabad and Bombay became prominent centres of cotton mills. By 1914, there were 129 spinning, weaving and other cotton mills within Bombay presidency. Between 1875–76 and 1913–14, the number of cotton textile mills in India increased from 47 to 271.
- An important landmark in the establishment of industries in India was the expansion of the railways system in India. The first passenger train ran in 1853, connecting Bombay with Thane. By the first decade of the twentieth century, railways was the biggest engineering industry in India. This British-managed industry, run by railway companies, employed 98,723 persons in 1911. The advent of railways and other means of transport and communication facilities helped the development of various industries.
- Jute was yet another industry that picked up in India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The first jute mill in Calcutta



was founded in 1855. The growth of jute industry was so rapid and by 1914, there were 64 mills in Calcutta Presidency. However, unlike the Bombay textile industry, these mills were owned by Europeans. Though the industrial development in the nineteenth century was mainly confined to very limited sectors like cotton, jute, etc., efforts were made to diversify the sectors. For example, the Bengal Coal Company was set up in 1843 in Raiganj by Dwarakanath Tagore (1794–1847), grandfather of Rabindranath Tagore. The coal industry picked up after 1892 and its growth peaked during First World War years.

- It was in the early twentieth century, industries in India began to diversify. The first major steel industry - Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) - was set up by the Tatas in 1907 as a part of swadeshi effort in Sakchi, Bihar. Prior to this, a group of Europeans had attempted in 1875 to found the Bengal Iron Company. Following this, the Bengal Iron and Steel Company was set up in 1889. However, TISCO made a huge headway than the other endeavours in this sector. Its production increased from 31,000 tons in 1912–13 to 1,81,000 tons in 1917–18.
- The First World War gave a landmark break to the industrialisation of the country. For the first time, Britain's strategic position in the East was challenged by Japan. The traditional trade routes were vulnerable to attack. To meet the requirements, development of industries in India became necessary. Hence, Britain loosened its grip and granted some concessions to the Indian capitalists. Comparative relaxation of control by the British government and the expansion of domestic market due to the War, facilitated the process of industrialisation. For the first time, an industrial commission was appointed in 1916. During the war-period, the cotton and jute industries showed much growth. Steel industry was yet another sector marked by substantial growth.
- Other industries showing progress were paper, chemicals, cement, fertilisers, tanning, etc. The first Indian owned paper mill - Couper Paper Mill - was set up in 1882 in Lucknow. Following this, Itaghur Paper Mill and Bengal Paper Mill, both owned by Europeans, were established. Cement manufacturing began in 1904 in Madras with the

establishment of South Indian Industries Ltd. Tanning industry began in the late nineteenth century and a government leather factory was set up in 1860 in Kanpur. The first Indian-owned National Tannery was established in 1905 in Calcutta. The gold mining in Kolar also started in the late nineteenth century in the Kolar mining field, Mysore.

- The inter-war period registered growth in manufacturing industries. Interestingly the growth rate was far better than Britain and even better than the world average. After a short slug in 1923–24, the output of textile industry began to pick up. During the interwar period, the number of looms and spindles increased considerably.
- In 1929–30, 44 per cent of the total amount of cotton piece goods consumed in India came from outside, but by 1933–34, after the Great Depression, the proportion had fallen to 20.5 percent. Other two industries which registered impressive growth were sugar and cement. The Interwar years saw a growth in the shipping industry too. The Scindia Steam Navigation Company Limited (1919) was the pioneer. In 1939, they even took over the Bombay Steam Navigation Company Ltd., a British concern. Eight Indian concerns were operational in this sector. A new phase of production began with the Second World War, which led to the extension of manufacturing industries to machineries, aircrafts, locomotives, and so on

Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, popularly known as J. N. Tata (1839– 1904), came from a Parsi (Zoroastrian) business family in Navsari, Baroda. The first successful Indian entrepreneur, he is called the father of the Indian modern industry. In order to help his father’s business, he travelled all over the world and this exposure helped him in his future endeavours. His trading company, established in 1868, evolved into the Tata Group. A nationalist, he called one of the mills established in Kurla, Bombay “Swadeshi”. His children Dorabji Tata and Ratanji Tata followed his dream and it was Dorabji Tata who finally realised the long term dream of his father to establish an iron and steel company in 1907. His enthusiasm was such that he spent two years in US to learn from the American Iron Industrialists. His yet another dream to set up a hydroelectric company did not materialize during his life time. However, the first major Hydroelectric project – Tata Hydroelectric

Company-was set up in 1910. With great foresight the Tatas founded the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

### **Industrial Development in Tamilnadu during the Depression**

- The industrial growth in the Madras Presidency was substantial. In Coimbatore, after Stanes Mill (Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills) was established in 1896, no other mill could come up. The objective conditions created by the Depression like fall in prices of land, cheapness of labour and low interest rates led to the expansion of textile industry in Coimbatore. Twenty nine mills and ginning factories were floated in the Coimbatore area during 1929-37. A cement factory started at Madukkarai in Coimbatore district in 1932 gave fillip to the cement industry in the state. The number of sugar factories in the province rose from two to eleven between 1931 and 1936. There were also proliferation of rice mills, oil mills and cinema enterprise during this period.

## 6. Religion in Nationalist Politics

### Introduction

- Before the establishment of British Raj, Mughals and their agents had ruled large parts of the country. Large sections of the Muslims therefore enjoyed the advantages of being the co-religionists of the ruling class many of whom were sovereigns, landlords, the generals and officials. The official and court language was Persian. When the British gradually replaced them they introduced a new system of administration. By the mid-nineteenth century English education predominated. The 1857 rebellion was the last gasp of the earlier ruling class. Following the brutal suppression of the revolt, the Muslims lost everything, their land, their job and other opportunities and were reduced to the state of penury. Unable to reconcile to the condition to which they were reduced, the Muslims retreated into a shell. And for the first few generations after 1857 they hated everything British. Besides they resented competing with the Hindus who had taken recourse to the new avenues opened by colonialism. With the emergence of Indian nationalism especially among the educated Hindu upper castes, the British saw in the Muslim middle class a force to keep the Congress in check. They cleverly exploited the situation for the promotion of their own interests. The competing three strands of nationalism namely Indian nationalism, Hindu nationalism, and Muslim nationalism are dealt with in this lesson.

### Origin and Growth of Communalism in British India

#### (a) Hindu Revivalism

- Some of the early nationalists believed that nationalism could be built only on a Hindu foundation. As pointed out by Sarvepalli Gopal, Hindu revivalism found its voice in politics through the Arya Samaj, founded in 1875, with its assertion of superior qualities of Hinduism. The organization of cow protection leagues in large parts of North India in the late nineteenth century gave a fillip to Hindu communalism. The effort of organizations such as Arya Samaj was

strengthened by the Theosophical movement led by Annie Besant from 1891. Besant identified herself with Hindu nationalists and expressed her ideas as follows: 'The Indian work is first of all the revival, strengthening and uplifting of ancient religions. This has brought with it a new self-respect, a pride in the past, a belief in the future and as an inevitable result, a great wave of patriotic life, the beginning of the rebuilding of a nation.'

### **(b) Rise of Muslims Consciousness**

- Islam on the other hand, to quote Sarvepalli Gopal again, was securing its articulation through the Aligarh movement. The British, by building the Aligarh college and backing Syed Ahmed Khan, had assisted the birth of a Muslim national party and Muslim political ideology. The Wahabi movement had also created cleavage in Hindu-Muslim relations. The Wahabis wanted to take Islam to its pristine purity and to end the superstition which according to them had sapped its vitality. From the Wahabis to the Khilafatists, grassroots activism played a significant role in the politicization of Muslims.
- Muslim consciousness developed due to other reasons as well. The Bengal government's order in the 1870s to replace Urdu by Hindi, and the Perso-Arabic script by Nagri script in the courts and offices created apprehension in the minds of the Muslim professional group.

### **(c) Divide and Rule Policy of British**

- The object of the British was to check the development of a composite Indian identity, and to forestall attempts at consolidation and unification of Indians. The British imperialism followed the policy of Divide and Rule. Bombay Governor Elphinstone wrote, 'Divide at Impera was the old Roman motto and it should be ours.' The British government lent legitimacy and prestige to communal ideology and politics despite the governance challenge that communal riots posed. The consequence of such sectarian approaches by all parties led to increasing animosity between Hindus and Muslims in northern India which had its fall out in other parts of India as well. The last decades of the nineteenth century was marked by a number of Hindu-Muslim

riots. Even in south India, there was a major riot in Salem in July-August 1882.

#### **(d) Cow Slaughter and Communal Riots**

- In July 1893, a dispute arose between Hindus and Muslims in Azamgarh district in the North-West Provinces. The riots that followed spread over a vast area, encompassing the United Provinces, Bihar, Gujarat and Bombay, claiming over a hundred lives. Gaurakshini Sabhas (cow protection leagues) were becoming more militant and there were reports of forcible interference with the sale or slaughter of cows. The riots over cow-slaughter became frequent after 1893 and 15 major riots of this type broke out in the Punjab alone between 1883 and 1891. Cow protectionists in the Punjab, the activities of Gaurakshini Sabhas in the Central Provinces, the campaigners for the recognition of Devanagiri as official language in courts and government offices in the United Provinces were also involved in the Congress organization.

#### **(e) Failure of Congress and Government to combat Communalism**

- The Indian National Congress, despite its secular and nationalist claims was unable to prevent the involvement of its members in the activities of Hindu communal organisations. This was a major factor in the Muslim distrust of the Congress. Congressmen's participation in shuddhi and sangathan campaigns of the Arya Samaj further estranged Hindus and Muslims. The British government could have adopted measures to outlaw Cow Protection Associations or to arrest the rank communalists who were causing distrust among the people. But the British deliberately dodged the issue, as the identification of the Congressmen with revivalist and communal causes provoked anti-Congress feelings among Muslims in North India. The Secretary of State Hamilton considered the development a happy augury for he was earlier worried over the growing solidarity among various social and religious groups in the context of the foundation of the Indian National Congress.

'One hardly knows what to wish for, unity of ideas and action would be very dangerous politically; divergence of ideas and collision are administratively troublesome. Of the two, the latter is the least risky,

though it throws anxiety and responsibility upon those on the spot where the friction exists.' - Hamilton to the Viceroy Elgin

### **(f) Moves of the Congress**

- Though many congress men had involvement in Hindu organisations like Arya Samaj, the Congress leadership was secular. When there was an attempt by some Congressmen to pass a resolution in the third session of the Indian National Congress, making cow killing a penal offence, the Congress leadership refused to entertain it. The Congress subsequently resolved that if any resolution affecting a particular class or community was objected to by the delegates representing that community, even though they were in minority, it would not be considered by the Congress.

### **(g) Role of Syed Ahmed Khan**

- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the founder of Aligarh movement was initially supportive of the Congress. Soon he was converted to the thinking that in a country governed by Hindus, Muslims would be helpless, as they would be in a minority. However, there were Muslim leaders like Badruddin Tyabji, Rahmatullah Sayani in Mumbai, Nawab Syed Mohammed Bahadur in Chennai and A. Rasul in Bengal who supported the Congress. But the majority of Muslims in north India toed the line of Syed Ahmed, and preferred to support the British. The introduction of representative institutions and of open competition to government posts gave rise to apprehensions amongst Muslims and prompted Syed and his followers to work for close collaboration with the Government. By collaborating with the Government Syed Ahmed Khan hoped to secure for his community a bigger share than otherwise would be due according to the principles of number or merit.
- The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was an attempt to narrow the Hindu-Muslim divide and place the genuine grievances of all the communities in the country before the British. But Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and other Muslim leaders like Syed Ameer Ali, the first Indian to find a place in London Privy Council, projected the Congress as a representative body of only the Hindus. Of the

seventy-two delegates attending the first session of the Congress only two were Muslims. Muslim leaders opposed the Congress tooth and nail on the plea that Muslims' participation in it would create an unfavourable reaction among the rulers against their community.

### **(h) Religion in Local Body Elections**

- Democratic politics had the unintended effect of fostering communal tendencies. Local administrative bodies in the 1880s provided the scope for pursuing communal politics. Municipal councillors acquired vast powers of patronage which were used to build-up one's political base. Hindus wresting the control of municipal boards from the Muslims and vice-versa led to communalisation of local politics.
- Lal Chand, the principal spokesperson of the Punjab Hindu Sabha and later the leader of Arya Samaj, highlighted the extent to which some Municipalities were organised on communal lines: 'The members of the Committee arrange themselves in two rows, around the presidential chair. On the left are seated the representatives of the banner of Islam and on the right the descendants of old Rishis of Aryavarta. By this arrangement the members are constantly reminded that they are not simply Municipal Councillors, but they are as Muhammedans versus Hindus and vice-versa....'.

### **(i) Week-kneed Policy of the Congress**

- At the dawn of twentieth century, during the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal (1905-06), Muslim supporters of the Swadeshi movement were condemned as "Congress touts." The silence of the Congress and its refusal to deal with such elements frontally not only provided stimulus to communal politics but also demoralized and discouraged the nationalist Muslims. Hindu communalism had also gathered strength round this time. It derived its sustenance from the view that the history of Muslim rule in India was characterised by degradation of the Hindus through forcible conversion, imposition of jizya, strict application of the shariat and the destruction of the places of worship. History textbooks and literature based on the prejudiced views of British writers added fuel to such views.



Hindu and Muslim Communalism were products of middle class infighting utterly divorced from the consciousness of the Hindu and Muslim masses. –Jawaharlal Nehru

- The situation took a turn for the worst in the first decade of the twentieth century when political radicalism went hand in hand with religious conservatism. Tilak, Aurobindo Gosh and Lala Lajpat Rai aroused anti-colonial consciousness by using religious symbols, festivals and platforms. The most aggravating factor was Tilak's effort to mobilise Hindus through the Ganapati festival. The Punjab Hindu Sabha founded in 1909 laid the foundation for Hindu communal ideology and politics. Lal Chand spared no efforts to condemn the Indian National Congress of pursuing a policy of appeasement towards Muslims.

### **Formation of All India Muslim League**

- On 1 October 1906, a 35-member delegation of the Muslim nobles, aristocrats, legal professionals and other elite sections of the community mostly associated with Aligarh movement gathered at Simla under the leadership of Aga Khan to present an address to Lord Minto, the viceroy. They demanded proportionate representation of Muslims in government jobs, appointment of Muslim judges in High Courts and members in Viceroy's council, etc. Though the Simla deputation failed to obtain any positive commitment from the Viceroy, it worked as a catalyst for the foundation of the All India Muslim League (AIML) to safeguard the interests of the Muslims in 1907. A group of big zamindars, erstwhile Nawabs and ex-bureaucrats became active members of this movement. The League supported the partition of Bengal, demanded separate electorates for Muslims, and pressed for safeguards for Muslims in Government Service.

### **Objectives of All India Muslim League**

- The All India Muslim League, the first centrally organized political party exclusively for Muslims, had the following objectives:

- To promote among the Muslims of India feelings of loyalty to the British Government, and remove any misconception that may arise as to the instruction of Government with regard to any of its measures.
- To protect and advance the political rights and interests of Muslims of India, and to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government.
- To prevent the rise among the Muslims of India of any feeling of hostility towards other communities without prejudice to the aforementioned objects of the League.
- Initially, AIML was an elitist organization of urbanized Muslims. However, the support of the British Government helped the League to become the sole representative body of Indian Muslims. Within three years of its formation, the AIML successfully achieved the status of separate electorates for the Muslims. It granted separate constitutional identity to the Muslims. The Lucknow Pact (1916) put an official seal on a separate political identity to Muslims.

Separate Electorate or Communal Electorate: Under this arrangement only Muslims could vote for the Muslim candidates. Minto-Morely Reforms, 1909 provided for eight seats to Muslims in the Imperial Legislative Council, out of the 27 non-officials to be elected. In the Legislative Council of the provinces seats reserved for the Muslim candidates were: Madras 4; Bombay 4; Bengal 5.

#### **(a) Separate Electorates and the Spread of Communalism**

- The institution of separate electorate was the principle technique adopted by the Government of British India for fostering and spreading communalism. The people were split into separate constituencies so that they voted communally, thought communally, judged the representatives communally and expressed their grievances communally.
- That the British did this with ulterior motive was evident from a note sent by one of the British officers to Lady Minto: 'I must send your Excellency a line to say that a very big thing has happened to-day. A

work of statesmanship, that will affect Indian History for many a long year. It is nothing less than pulling of 62 million people from joining the ranks of seditious opposition.

**Communalism:** Organising a religious group on the basis of its hostility towards the followers of other religions to fight even material issues. Communalism as an ideology or movement has been defined in various ways by various scholars. According to Nehru, communalism is one of the obvious examples of backward-looking people trying to hold on to something that is wholly out of place in the modern world and is essentially opposed to the concept of nationalism. According to another scholar, communalism denotes 'organised attempt of a group to bring about change in the face of resistance from other groups or the government through collective mobilisation based on a narrow ideology.'

- The announcement of separate electorates and the incorporation of the principle of "divide and rule" into a formal constitutional arrangement made the estrangement between Hindus and Muslims total.

### **Emergence of the All India Hindu Mahasabha**

- In the wake of the formation of the Muslim League and introduction of the Government of India Act of 1909, a move to start a Hindu organisation was in the air. In pursuance of the resolution passed at the fifth Punjab Hindu Conference at Ambala and the sixth conference at Ferozepur, the first all Indian Conference of Hindus was convened at Haridwar in 1915. The All India Hindu Mahasabha was started there with headquarters at Dehra Dun. Provincial Hindu Sabhas were started subsequently in UP, with headquarters at Allahabad and in Bombay and Bihar. While the sabhas in Bombay and Bihar were not active, there was little response in Madras and Bengal.
- Predominantly urban in character, the Mahasabha was concentrated in the larger trading cities of north India, particularly in Allahabad, Kanpur, Benares, Lucknow and Lahore. In UP, the Mahasabha, to a large extent was the creation of the educated middle class leaders who were also activists in the Congress. The Khilafat movement gave

some respite to the separatist politics of the communalists. As a result, between 1920 and 1922, the Mahasabha ceased to function.

- The entry of ulema into politics led Hindus to fear a revived and aggressive Islam. Even important Muslim leaders like Ali brothers had always been Khilafatists first and Congressmen second. The power of mobilisation on religious grounds demonstrated by the Muslims during the Khilafat movement motivated the Hindu communalists to imitate them in mobilising the Hindu masses. Suddhi movement was not a new phenomenon but in the post-Khilafat period it assumed new importance. In an effort to draw Hindus into the boycott of the visit of Prince of Wales in 1921, Swami Shradhananda tried to revive the Mahasabha by organizing cow-protection propaganda.

Before the World War I, Britain had promised to safeguard the interests of the Caliph as well the Kaaba (the holiest seat of Islam). But after Turkey's defeat in the War, they refused to keep their word. The stunned Muslim community showed its displeasure to the British government by starting the Khilafat movement to secure the Caliphate in Turkey.

- The bloody Malabar rebellion of 1921, where Muslim peasants were pitted against both the British rulers and Hindu landlords, gave another reason for the renewed campaign of the Hindu Mahasabha. Though the outbreak was basically an agrarian revolt, communal passion ran high in consequence of which Gandhi himself viewed it as a Hindu-Muslim conflict. Gandhi wanted Muslim leaders to tender a public apology for the happenings in Malabar.

#### **(a) Communalism in United Provinces (UP)**

- The suspension of the non-cooperation movement in 1922 and the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 left the Muslims in a state of frustration. In the aftermath of Non-Co-operation movement, the alliance between the Khilafatists and the Congress crumbled. There was a fresh spate of communal violence, as Hindus and Muslims, in the context of self-governing institutions created under the Act of 1919, began to stake their political claims and in the process vied with each other to acquire power and position. Of 968 delegates attending

the sixth annual conference of the Hindu Mahasabha in Varanasi in August 1923, 56.7 % came from the U.P. The United Provinces (UP), the Punjab, Delhi and Bihar together contributed 86.8 % of the delegates. Madras, Bombay and Bengal combined sent only 6.6% of the delegates. 1920s was a trying period for the Congress. This time the communal tension in the United Province was not only due to the zeal of Hindu and Muslim religious leaders, but was fuelled by the political rivalries of the Swarajists and Liberals.

- In Allahabad, Motilal Nehru and Madan Mohan Malaviya confronted each other. When Nehru's faction emerged victorious in the municipal elections of 1923, Malaviya's faction began to exploit religious passions. The District Magistrate Crosthwaite who conducted the investigation reported: 'The Malavia family have deliberately stirred up the Hindus and this has reacted on the Muslims.'

#### **(b) The Hindu Mahasabha**

- In the Punjab communalism as a powerful movement had set in completely. In 1924 Lala Lajpat Rai openly advocated the partition of the Punjab into Hindu and Muslim Provinces. The Hindu Mahasabha, represented the forces of Hindu revivalism in the political domain, raised the slogan of 'Akhand Hindustan' against the Muslim League's demand of separate electorates for Muslims. Ever since its inception, the Mahasabha's role in the freedom struggle has been rather controversial. While not supportive of British rule, the Mahasabha did not offer its full support to the nationalist movement either.
- Since the Indian National Congress had to mobilize the support of all classes and communities against foreign domination, the leaders of different communities could not press for principle of secularism firmly for the fear of losing the support of religious-minded groups. The Congress under the leadership of Gandhi held a number of unity conferences during this period, but to no avail.

### (c) Delhi Conference of Muslims and their Proposals

- One great outcome of the efforts at unity, however, was an offer by the Conference of Muslims, which met at Delhi on March 20, 1927 to give up separate electorates if four proposals were accepted. 1. the separation of Sind from Bombay 2. Reforms for the Frontier and Baluchistan 3. Representation by population in the Punjab and Bengal and 4. Thirty-three per cent seats for the Muslims in the Central Legislature. Motilal Nehru and S. Srinvasan persuaded the All India Congress Committee to accept the Delhi proposals formulated by the Conference of the Muslims. But communalism had struck such deep roots that the initiative fell through. Gandhi commented that the Hindu-Muslim issue had passed out of human hands. Instead of seizing the opportunity to resolve the tangle, the Congress chose to drag its feet by appointing committees, one to find out whether it was financially feasible to separate Sind from Bombay and the other to examine proportional representation as a means of safeguarding Muslim majorities. Jinnah who had taken the initiative to narrow down the breach between the two, and had been hailed the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity by Sarojini, felt let down as the Hindu Mahasabha members present at the All Parties Convention held in Calcutta in 1928 rejected all amendments and destroyed any possibility of unity. Thereafter, most of the Muslims were convinced that they would get a better deal from Government rather than from the Congress. In despair Jinnah left the country, only to return many years later as a rank communalist.

Expressing anguish over the development of sectarian nationalism, Gandhi wrote, 'There are as many religions as there are individuals, but those who are conscious of the spirit of the nationality do not interfere with one another's religion. If Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in a dream land. The Hindus, the Sikhs, the Muhammedans, the Parsis and the Christians who have made their country are fellow countrymen and they will have to live in unity if only for their interest. In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms nor has it ever been so in India.'

#### **(d) Communal Award and its Aftermath**

- The British Government was consistent in promoting communalism. Even the delegates for the second Round Table Conference were chosen on the basis of their communal bearings. After the failure of the Round Table Conferences, the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald announced the Communal Award which further vitiated the political climate.
- The R.S.S. founded in 1925 was expanding and its volunteers had shot up to 1,00,000. K.B. Hedgewar, V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalker were attempting to elaborate on the concept of the Hindu Rashtra and openly advocated that 'the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must adopt the Hindu culture and language...they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation claiming nothing.' V.D. Savarkar asserted that 'We Hindus are a Nation by ourselves'. Though the Congress had forbidden its members from joining the Mahasabha or the R.S.S. as early as 1934, it was only in December 1938 that the Congress Working Committee declared Mahasabha membership to be a disqualification for remaining in the Congress.

#### **First Congress Ministries**

- The nationalism of the Indian National Congress was personified by Mahatma Gandhi, who rejected the narrow nationalism exemplified by the Arya Samaj and the Aligarh movement and strove to evolve a political identity that transcended the different religions. Notwithstanding the state-supported communalism of different hues, the Indian National Congress remained a dominant political force in India. In the 1937 elections, Congress won in seven of the eleven provinces and formed the largest party in three others. The Muslim League's performance was dismal. It succeeded in winning only 4.8 per cent of the Muslim votes. The Congress had emerged as a mass secular party. Yet the Government branded it a Hindu organisation and projected the Muslim League as the real representative of the Muslims and treated it on a par with the Congress.
- Seeing this dismal performance, the Muslim League was convinced that the only choice left to it was to whip up emotions on communal

lines in provinces like Bengal and Punjab. The over confidence of the Congress, given its overwhelming victory in the elections, made it misjudge Muslim sentiment. Jinnah exploited the emotional campaign of 'Islam in danger' to gain mass Muslim support after the 1936-37 elections - a divisive cause in which the Hindu Mahasabha came to its help through coalition ministries.

### Observation of Day of Deliverance

- The Second World War broke out in 1939 and the Viceroy of India Linlithgow immediately announced that India was also at war. Since the declaration was made without any consultation with the Congress, it was greatly resented by it. The Congress Working Committee decided that all Congress ministries in the provinces would resign. After the resignation of Congress ministries, the provincial governors suspended the legislatures and took charge of the provincial administration.
- The Muslim League celebrated the end of Congress rule as a day of deliverance on 22 December 1939. On that day, the League passed resolutions in various places against Congress for its alleged atrocities against Muslims. The demonstration of Nationalist Muslims was dubbed as anti-Islamic and denigrated. It was in this atmosphere that the League passed its resolution on 26 March 1940 in Lahore demanding a separate nation for Muslims.
- Neither Jinnah nor Nawab Zafrullah Khan then had considered creation of separate state for Muslims practicable. However, on March 23, 1940, the Muslim League formally adopted the idea by passing a resolution. The text of the resolution ran as under: "Resolved that it is the concerted view of this session of the All India Muslim League that no c o n s t i t u t i o n a l scheme would be workable in this country or acceptable to Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, viz. that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the area in which the Muslims are numerically in majority should be grouped to constitute Independent State." The League resolved that the British government before leaving India should effect the partition of the country into Indian union and Pakistan.



Though the idea of Pakistan came from the Muslim League platform in 1940 it had been conceived ten years earlier by the poet-scholar Mohammad Iqbal. At the League's annual conference at Allahabad (1930), Iqbal expressed his wish to see a consolidated North-west Indian Muslim State. It was then articulated forcefully by Rahmat Ali, a Cambridge student. The basis of League's demand was its "Two Nation Theory" which first came from Sir Wazir Hasan in his presidential address at Bombay session of League in 1937. He said, "the Hindus and Mussalmans inhabiting this vast continent are not two communities but should be considered two nations in many respects."

### Direct Action Day

- Hindu communalism and Muslim communalism fed on each other throughout the early 1940s. Muslim League openly boycotted the Quit India movement of 1942. In the elections held in 1946 to the Constituent Assembly, Muslim League won all 30 seats reserved for Muslims in the Central Legislative Assembly and most of the reserved provincial seats as well. The Congress Party was successful in gathering most of the general electorate seats, but it could no longer effectively insist that it spoke for the entire population of British India.
- In 1946 Secretary of State Pethick- Lawrence led a three-member Cabinet Mission to New Delhi with the hope of resolving the Congress-Muslim League deadlock and, thus, of transferring British power to a single Indian administration. Cripps was primarily responsible for drafting the Cabinet Mission Plan. The plan proposed a three-tier federation for India, integrated by a central government in Delhi, which would be limited to handling foreign affairs, communications, defence, and only those finances required to take care of union matters. The subcontinent was to be divided into three major groups of provinces: Group A, to include the Hindu-majority provinces of the Bombay Presidency, Madras Presidency, the United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, and the Central Provinces; Group B, to contain the Muslim-majority provinces of the Punjab, Sind, the North-West Frontier, and Baluchistan; and Group C, to include the Muslim-majority Bengal and the Hindu-majority Assam. The group

governments were to be autonomous in everything excepting in matters reserved to the centre. The princely states within each group were to be integrated later into their neighbouring provinces. Local provincial governments were to have the choice of opting out of the group in which they found themselves, should a majority of their people desire to do so.

- Jinnah accepted the Cabinet Mission's proposal, as did the Congress leaders. But after several weeks of behind-the-scene negotiations, on July 29, 1946, the Muslim League adopted a resolution rejecting the Cabinet Mission Plan and called upon the Muslims throughout India to observe a 'Direct Action Day' in protest on August 16. The rioting and killing that took place for four days in Calcutta led to a terrible violence resulting in thousands of deaths. Gandhi who was until then resisting any effort to vivisect the country had to accede to the demand of the Muslim League for creation of Pakistan.
- Mountbatten who succeeded Wavell came to India as Viceroy to effect the partition plan and transfer of power.